

ARTICLE

Forging National Belonging: Transformation, Visibility, and Dress in the German-Jewish Youth Movement *Blau-Weiss*, 1912–1927

Svenja Bethke* 

University of Leicester, UK

*Corresponding author. Email: sb744@le.ac.uk

Abstract

Looking at *Blau-Weiss* as the first Zionist youth movement in Germany between 1912 and 1927, the article examines the role of dress in expressing new feelings of national belonging as “Jewish” in modern Germany. Drawing on publications of the movement, memoirs, and photographs, the article shows how *Blau-Weiss* members tried to become visible as Jews while at the same time trying to copy the dress codes of the nationalist German youth movement *Wandervogel*. It further shows how, after the First World War, *Blau-Weiss* tried to forge their own way of Zionist dressing. The article argues that it was not the actual clothes worn or the perception of others that was most crucial to the creation of a national Jewish identity, but rather the inner function that reflections and debates on dress had for *Blau-Weiss* members in forging and redefining their feelings of belonging and identification as Zionist Jews in Germany.

Keywords: Germany; youth group; nationalism; Zionism; uniform; fashion

“We who wander as Jews, and always openly confess that we are Jews through our greeting ‘Shalom’ and our songs, we must pay special attention to our outward appearance. We are not allowed to hike with long trousers, collars, etc. like the many ‘hiking clubs’ that are emerging now, but we have to show ourselves in real hiking clothes, I ask you to pay special heed to this.”¹

This statement on the significance of dress and what it should look like within the German-Jewish hiking club *Blau-Weiss* (Blue-White) was presented to the readership of the club’s main publication, the *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, in 1914. Author Georg Todtmann claimed that dress was crucial in three ways. It allowed the members to improve their outward appearance “as Jews,” to distinguish themselves from non-Jewish hiking groups, and to express authenticity. Dress and interconnected notions of visibility were critical to forging and expressing feelings of belonging and identification within the German-Jewish youth movement *Blau-Weiss*, which operated between 1912 and 1927. With 7,000 members at the height of its existence at the end of 1918, *Blau-Weiss* was the first and largest Zionist youth group in Germany, with further groups founded in Austria and Czechoslovakia.²

¹ Georg Todtmann, “Blau-Weißer,” *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 3, June 1914, 10. Primary sources in this article have been translated from German by the author; where terms were deemed particularly characteristic, the German term has been kept and explained.

² Glenn R. Sharfman, “Between Identities: The German-Jewish Youth Movement *Blau-Weiss*, 1912–26,” in *Forging Modern Jewish Identities: Public Faces and Private Struggles*, ed. Michael Berkowitz et al. (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 198–228, esp. 207; Ivonne Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus. Der jüdische Wanderbund*

Stressing the importance of nature and physical activities to transform youth, it was inspired by the German nationalist *Wandervogel* and to a more limited degree the British Boy Scouts.³ Yet, *Blau-Weiss* envisaged its transformation as a Jewish nationalist (Zionist) group that would break away from the German context in which it was operating.⁴ Zionism had emerged as a Jewish political movement in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, resulting from the experience of antisemitic exclusion and pogroms and the integration of modern ideas of nationalism.⁵ Moving away from the belief that full emancipation of the Jews would be possible outside a land of their own, in the diaspora, the Zionist movement argued for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in what the German Zionists—including *Blau-Weiss*—called “Palestine” or less often “Eretz Israel,” the land of Israel.⁶

Scholars have analyzed the emergence and development of *Blau-Weiss* by considering questions of Jewish belonging in Germany and its place within the broader German Zionist movement.⁷ The importance of cultural practices and education to create a new German-Jewish-Zionist-identity has been highlighted.⁸ Although practices such as hiking, singing, learning Hebrew, and physical exercise have received attention, dress and related practices have been largely ignored.⁹ This is surprising given that guidance on how to dress and why that was important played a crucial role in the campaign to educate and transform the Jewish *Blau-Weiss* members. Like other Zionist youth groups, *Blau-Weiss* highlighted the importance of the “bodily experience” in the evolution of its members as they acquired a new German-Zionist-Jewish identity; on the individual level, this meant the bodily experience of nature—in contrast to the image of the “Jewish thinker”—and on the collective level, the experience of a new kind of Jewish community.¹⁰ Research on

Blau-Weiss als Versuch einer praktischen Umsetzung des Programms der Jüdischen Renaissance (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 46.

³ Bothrio Kaphalos, “Die Boy-Scout Bewegung,” *Blau-Weiss Führerblätter*, Nr. 6–7, 1921, 97–106. Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 46; Walter Laquer, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung. Eine Historische Studie* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1978); Rüdiger Ahrens, *Bündische Jugend. Eine neue Geschichte 1918–1933* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015); Hans Tramer, “Jüdischer Wanderbund Blau-Weiss. Ein Beitrag zu seiner äusseren Geschichte,” in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 5, no.17 (1962): 23–43, esp. 34.

⁴ Michael Brenner, “Turning Inward: Jewish Youth in Weimar Germany,” in *In Search of Jewish Community: Jewish Identities in Germany and Austria, 1918–1933*, ed. Michael Brenner and Derek Penslar (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 56–73, esp. 59.

⁵ See David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); David Vital, *Zionism the Formative Years* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); David Vital, *Zionism the Crucial Phase* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Walter Laqueur, *The History of Zionism* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2003).

⁶ Susanne Kunze, “‘Wir wollen doch für Palästina Pioniere und nicht Pfüscher großziehen.’ Jugendkulturelle Blicke auf Palästina—Das Beispiel des Jüdischen Wanderbundes Blau-Weiß” (MA diss., University of Hamburg, 2021), 7.

⁷ Sharfman, “Between Identities”; Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*; Jörg Hackeschmidt, *Von Kurt Blumenfeld zu Norbert Elias: Die Erfindung einer jüdischen Nation* (Frankfurt/Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1997); Hermann Meier-Cronemeyer, “Jüdische Jugendbewegung,” *Germania Judaica*, First Part, *Neue Folge* 27/28, Jg. VIII, H. 1/2, Second Part, *Neue Folge* 29/30, Jg. VIII, H. 3–4 (1969), 1–123; Ulrike Pilarczyk, Ofer Ashkenazi and Arne Homann, ed., *Hachschara und Jugend—Alija Wege jüdischer Jugend nach Palästina 1918–1941* (Gifhorn: Gifhorn Bildung und Kultur Gifhorn 2020).

⁸ Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*.

⁹ One exception is Ulrike Pilarczyk, who briefly touches on the importance of dress in her monograph on photographic practices in the German-Jewish youth movement: Ulrike Pilarczyk, *Gemeinschaft in Bildern: Jüdische Jugendbewegung und zionistische Erziehungspraxis in Deutschland und Palästina/Israel* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), 91. On dress and (German-)Jewish identity beyond the Zionist context, see also Leonard J. Greenspoon, ed., *Fashioning Jews: Clothing, Culture, and Commerce* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2013); Mila Ganeva, *Women and Weimar Fashion, Discourses and Displays in German Culture 1918–1933* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 2011); Uwe Westphal, *Fashion Metropolis 1836–1939: The Story of the Rise and Destruction of the Jewish Fashion Industry* (Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2019); Alfred Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume* (London: Peter Owen, 1981); and Eric Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁰ Bundesleitung Berlin, ed., *Blau-Weiss Führer. Leitfaden für die Arbeit im Jüd. Wanderbund “Blau-Weiss,”* 5677/1917, 2, 6, 20; Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 57; Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 204.

Zionism and Zionist youth groups has stressed the importance of body images and practices in constructing a new counter-image of the “strong muscular Jew,” mostly male, to combat long-standing antisemitic stereotypes.¹¹ Sharon Gillerman has shown for Weimar Germany that this also concerned Zionist ideas of the “national Jewish body,” often mirroring German ideas of a “national community.”¹² Surprisingly, little consideration has been given to the fact that these bodies, both as ideals and in practice, were always *dressed* bodies. Although scholars have examined the role of dress in forging feelings of belonging for non-Jewish youth groups such as the Boy Scouts, Jewish youth groups have received less attention.¹³ This article will argue that dress played an important role in forging and experimenting with a new Zionist identity; images of the Jewish body were critical, but they can only be understood by integrating the role of dress into the analysis. In this article, dress is understood, as formulated by Joanne Entwistle, as an “embodied practice” that renders the body socially meaningful by creating the link between the individual identity and social belonging.¹⁴ As such, it is considered a crucial arena for the realization of what Gillerman has identified as attempts of “Jewish revitalisation” in Germany.¹⁵ It will show how such an approach can deepen our understanding of processes of adaptation and shifting feelings of national and cultural belonging and identification, which are of broader relevance to historical studies of diasporas, migration, and nationalisms.

Dress ideals and practices differed within the heterogeneous Zionist movement according to geographical spaces, time, and the groups under consideration.¹⁶ *Blau-Weiss* was established as the first Zionist youth movement in Germany in 1912. Focusing on this case study of *Blau-Weiss* allows us to consider key challenges German Jews were confronted with at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the promise of integration and the resulting acculturation and religious reform in the nineteenth century, Jewishness was increasingly restricted to religion. With the declining significance of religion and limited integration into German society, Jews searched for other forms of Jewish community and identity.¹⁷ As one response, Jewish organizations such as *Blau-Weiss* emerged and called for the inner and outer transformation into the “new Jew.”¹⁸ Linked to the bodily transformation was the requirement to know how to dress appropriately and to look after one’s clothes. What this dress should look like was not clear in the beginning, and *Blau-Weiss*

¹¹ Daniel Wildtmann, *Der veränderbare Körper, jüdische Turner, Männlichkeit und das Wiedergewinnen von Geschichte in Deutschland um 1900* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Ofer Nordheimer Nur, *Eros and Tragedy: Jewish Male Fantasies and the Masculine Revolution of Zionism* (Boston: Academic Study Press, 2014); Ezra Mendelsohn, ed., *Jews and the Sporting Life* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Michael Brenner and Gideon Reuveni, ed., *Emancipation through Muscles: Jews and Sports in Europe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Robert Jütte, *Leib und Leben im Judentum* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag 2016), 94–113.

¹² Sharon Gillerman, *Germans into Jews: Remaking the Jewish Social Body in the Weimar Republic* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3–5.

¹³ Tammy M. Proctor, “(Uni)Forming Youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Britain, 1908–39,” in *History Workshop Journal* 45 (1998): 103–34; Timothy Parsons, “The Consequences of Uniformity: The Struggle for the Boy Scout Uniform in Colonial Kenya,” in *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 2 (2006): 361–83.

¹⁴ Joanne Entwistle, “The Dressed Body,” in *Body Dressing*, ed. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 33–58; Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Theorizing Fashion and Dress in Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

¹⁵ Gillerman, *Germans into Jews*, 2.

¹⁶ Svenja Bethke, “How to Dress Up in Eretz Israel, 1880s–1948: A Visual Approach to Clothing, Fashion and Nation Building,” in *International Journal of Fashion Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 217–37.

¹⁷ Michael Brenner and Derek Penslar, “Introduction,” in *In Search of Jewish Community*, ix–xvi; Shulamit Volkov, “German Jews between Fulfillment & Disillusion: The Individual and the Community,” in *In Search of Jewish Community*, 1–14, esp. 8; Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁸ Bernhard Trefz, *Jugendbewegung und Juden in Deutschland: Eine historische Untersuchung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des “Deutsch-Jüdischen Wanderbundes ‘Kameraden’”* (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Brenner, “Turning Inward”; Jutta Hetkamp, *Die jüdische Jugendbewegung in Deutschland von 1913–1933* (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 1994).

leaders and members defined and reformulated their notions of the ideal way of dressing throughout the organization's existence.

The German Zionist movement, represented by the *Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland* (ZfVD), was very small prior to 1933. While the Jewish population in Germany counted 500,000 Jews before the First World War, only 9,000 were Zionist members with numbers going up to 33,000 between the end of the war and 1933; the number of active members was even smaller.¹⁹ In contrast, the majority of the assimilated liberal Jewish population, represented by the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*, deemed the call for a Jewish nation counterproductive to the progress of integration into the larger Germany society. For German Zionists, the core question was to which extent their identification as nationalist Jews and their rootedness in Germany could be integrated.²⁰ The answers to this question changed. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the dream of a Jewish homeland, sought through diplomatic means, served as a complementary identification concept that only gained in importance as a concrete place for resettlement after the First World War. In 1922, *Blau-Weiss* criticized the ZfVD for not advocating strongly enough for concrete settlement in Palestine and distanced itself from the ZfVD. The changes within the broader German Zionist movement and within *Blau-Weiss* also influenced the significance *Blau-Weiss* attributed to dress.

The importance of dress within *Blau-Weiss* was discussed in its main publication, the *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, after 1923 called *Neue Folge*, the internally published *Führerblätter*, as well as single publications and guidelines published after its dissolution.²¹ Since the movement's inception, its leaders, older adolescents and young adults, were expected to pass on their knowledge in their roles as "Führer," leader, to the younger *Blau-Weiss* members.²² The publications played a crucial role in communicating the agendas and values of the movement, including guidance on how to dress. Modes of dress were also communicated through visual means. Photography played an important role in documenting activities and creating visual representations of the movement.²³ Dress helped to forge a visual group identity. In publications, guidance was given on how photographs should be taken and of what, highlighting the experience of being in nature and as a group. The leaders wanted the pictures to look different from other youth groups' pictures.²⁴ We cannot know how far the outfits depicted in the photographs were representative of the way *Blau-Weiss* members dressed on hikes. Yet, integrating such photographs allows us to reflect on the extent to which visual representations of *Blau-Weiss* members' dress differed from those of the non-Jewish German hiking clubs, and how far they mirrored the ideals of the written publications.²⁵ *Blau-Weiss* photographs have been retrieved from key collections of the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI)

¹⁹ Stephen M. Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897-1933: The Shaping of a Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977), 33.

²⁰ Jehuda Reinharz, "Three Generations of German Zionism," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 9 (1978): 95-110; Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 26-31. See also Stefan Vogt, *Subalterne Positionierungen. Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland, 1890-1933* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2016); Hagit Lavsky, *Before Catastrophe: The Distinctive Path of German Zionism* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996); Poppel, *Zionism in Germany, 1897-1933*.

²¹ The *Blau-Weiss-Blätter* are accessible through the Jewish newspaper database *Compact Memory*, made available by the university library in Frankfurt. The *Führerblätter* and the single publications are accessible through the National Library (NL), Jerusalem.

²² Sharfman, "Between Identities," 203.

²³ See also the report by former member Dolf Michaelis on visual education in the youth movement. Dolf Michaelis, "Mein Blau-Weiss-Erlebnis," in *Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts* 17 (1962), 44-67, esp. 61 and 62. For example, see *Blau-Weiss Werbeheft*, ed. Bundesleitung der Jüdischen Wanderbünde Blau-Weiss, 1920; Pilarczyk, *Gemeinschaft in Bildern*, 60.

²⁴ See the instructions in *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 1, April 1914, 4. Here, it was emphasized that a *Blau-Weiss* photograph should look different from photographs of other German youth groups, not only because of the clothing.

²⁵ For more systematic methodological suggestions on how to use photographs in research on Zionist dress see Bethke, "How to Dress Up".

archives, namely the Rudolf and Rudolphina Menzel Collection (AR 25014), as well as the Gidal Bild Archiv at the Steinheim Institute and, for the Wandervogel, from the *Archiv der deutschen Jugendbewegung* (Adjb), all of which provided images for this article. In addition, the photographic collection of *Blau-Weiss*, A 66, from the *Central Zionist Archives* (CZA) has been researched. In total, approximately 500 photographs have been examined. To shed light on the role of dress and memory beyond *Blau-Weiss*'s existence, the sources used in this article are complemented by an anniversary booklet, memoirs, and a published oral history interview with a former *Blau-Weiss* member.

Jewish Bodies, Dress, and Visibility between Emancipation and Zionism

Scholarship has analyzed the “Jewish body” as a social construction, an imagined body formed by both outside observers and Jews themselves.²⁶ Since the medieval period, non-Jews have believed that the allegedly corrupted character of Jews found its expression in specific body features, representing the Jewish man as weak and feminized and the Jewish woman as beautiful but dangerous: “As long as these stereotypes existed, Jewish men and women noted them, related and reacted to them.”²⁷ Equally, Jews cared about the positive connotations of their bodily features, which marked their distinctiveness from their non-Jewish cohabitants. In modern times, believing that identities could be modified, Jews also attempted to make their Jewishness visible or invisible, depending on the context.²⁸ As Gillerman has shown, ideas of a national Jewish community resulted in various measures to “improve” the Jewish body on the individual and the collective level.²⁹ Entwistle has argued more broadly for the integration of body and dress as “a crucial arena for the performance and articulation of identities.” Understanding dress as an “embodied practice,” specific attention needs to be paid to the social context with its cultural codes and notions of appropriateness.³⁰ Dressed Jewish bodies operated not only at the intersection of Jewish and non-Jewish contexts, but also within various inner Jewish contexts. Cultural codes and notions of appropriateness fluctuate and are not always understood by others as the wearer intends. Historically, this was particularly true for questions of Jewish identity. In premodern times “Jewish dress” meant religious dress. On the one hand, ways of dressing were influenced by Jewish laws and traditions. Regulations were designed to prevent Jews from following the sartorial customs of non-Jews. In addition, dress was required to express modesty and humility; expensive clothes should be foregone. Wearing a combination of wool and linen was forbidden (*shaatnez*), and Jewish men were required to wear the *tzitzit*, the fringes, as part of their dress, a girdle, and to grow sidelocks (*peoth*). Jewish women were expected to show modesty by covering their knees and arms; in addition, married women needed to cover their hair.³¹ Not only did dress cover the body, but it also expressed belonging, thus attributing social meaning to the body. On the other hand, non-Jewish authorities used dress to exert control. They imposed dress codes and symbols on the Jewish population to make them visible and mark their bodies as “different” to prevent relationships between Jews and Christians. Since the early thirteenth century, Catholic rulers in Europe had imposed the wearing of a badge, following the precedent set by earlier regulations in some Muslim-ruled caliphates in the eighth century. In Europe, the badge took the shape of a ring and was usually yellow, sometimes red, or parti-colored red and white; it had to be worn throughout most of the medieval and premodern periods.³² Another feature in

²⁶ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Jütte, *Leib und Leben*.

²⁷ Cornelia Aust, “Introduction: The Jewish Body,” in *Central Europe* 17, no. 1 (2019): 1–4, esp. 2.

²⁸ Aust, “Introduction: The Jewish Body,” 2; Kerry Wallach, *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

²⁹ Gillerman, *Germans into Jews*, 3–5.

³⁰ Entwistle, “The Dressed Body,” 37–38.

³¹ Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume*, 98.

³² Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume*, 81, 82; Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress*, 47–55.

medieval times was the pointed Jewish hat for men, which was in its simplest form a plain cone, often accompanied by the caftan. While Jews were deliberately wearing the Jewish hat, Christian authorities wanted them to wear the badge in addition, which the Jews saw as a mark of degradation and shame.³³ Emancipation in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century led to secularization, and some Jews converted to Christianity.³⁴ Jews adapted dress codes and fashion trends popular among the non-Jewish population.³⁵ With some Jews remaining religious, elements of modern and religious dress coexisted and were sometimes integrated.³⁶ In Germany, Jews adjusted to contemporary fashion trends and have played a key role in the ready-to-wear textile and fashion industry since the nineteenth century.³⁷ At the turn of the nineteenth century, the idea of becoming visible as “Jewish” became a key element of the Zionist project; in 1899, Heinrich York Steiner wrote in the Zionist publication *Die Welt*:

We did not become Zionists to have a colored rag wafting from our cloak. No, we pinned the yellow badge on the outside because our non-Jewish friends always thought it was *hidden* under our clothes.... We don't want to wander around as lonely fools with a yellow badge on our coat; we want to create general respect for the yellow color.³⁸

Although this quotation needs to be understood symbolically, because by the time it was written Jews were not required to wear the medieval yellow badge, it shows that notions of visibility, often expressed through dress, played a role in expressing identification with the Zionist project. It also shows the strong link between the Jewish body—here as a symbol for the allegedly hidden Jewishness—and dress as an “embodied practice” to become visible. Not only Zionists but also liberal Jewish groups used symbols such as badges and pins and the color yellow to express their Jewishness.³⁹ The colors blue and white, however, became specific symbols of the Zionist movement. Anchored in the Torah, the blue-colored dye *tekhelet* was of crucial significance in Jewish culture, corresponding to the color of divine revelation, whereas white symbolized physical and intellectual purity.⁴⁰ Michael Berkowitz has shown that to achieve respectability and represent strength, the first generation of Zionists at the turn of the nineteenth century chose very festive outfits for their congresses.⁴¹ These were often complemented by subtle symbols, often in blue and white, which required inside knowledge.

Blau-Weiss between Germanness and Jewishness: Transformation and Visibility

We were children from small and middle-class households.... From the outside, everything was very tidy. Every child knew exactly what to wear and how to behave. And then suddenly someone came and tore these children out of their parents' homes

³³ Rubens, *A History of Jewish Costume*, 92–94; Silverman, *A Cultural History of Jewish Dress*, 55–57.

³⁴ Steven M. Lowenstein, “Religious Practice and Mentality,” in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945*, ed. Marion Kaplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 145–58.

³⁵ On the adaptation to non-Jewish dress codes as an important aspect of the emancipation, see also Karl Glaser, “Oratio pro domo,” *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 5, Nr. 2, August 1917, 30.

³⁶ Lowenstein, “Religious Practice and Mentality,” 152, 154.

³⁷ Steven M. Lowenstein, “German Jews and Their Social Relationships,” in *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618–1945*, ed. Marion Kaplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 160–172, esp. 160 and 161; Uwe Westphal, *Fashion Metropolis Berlin 1836–1939*, 34–53.

³⁸ Heinrich York Steiner, “Zionismus—Egoismus,” *Die Welt*, Jahrgang 3, Nr. 31, 4. August 1899, 5; bold font in original.

³⁹ Wallach, *Passing Illusions*, 52–53.

⁴⁰ Gadi Sagiv, “Deep Blue: Notes on the Jewish Snail Fight,” *Contemporary Jewry* 35, no. 3 (2015): 285–313; Jehuda Reinharz, *Dokumente zur Geschichte des deutschen Zionismus, 1882–1993* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981), xxxix–xl.

⁴¹ Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 9, 26–27.

and told them exactly the opposite of what they had heard at home, whatever this so-called Jewish attitude of these parents may have been. That being a Jew meant something that you don't have to say carefully and hide from the environment, but something that you naturally and freely confess.⁴²

In this reminiscence, Franz Meyer, a former member of *Blau-Weiss*, pointed to two crucial characteristics of the youth movement, the idea of transformation and the visibility of this transformation. The process encompassed not only the differentiation from German society, but also from the members' parents' generation, often part of the middle class, and their sense of being a Jew in Germany. When they entered the German middle class, they also adopted its social norms with regard to dress and appearance.⁴³ The image (Figure 1) from the family photo album of the Jewish middle-class family Schild-Scheier on vacation in Friedrichsroda, Germany, in 1913, illustrates aspects of this assimilation. Jewish middle-class women, around the time *Blau-Weiss* emerged, had given up on the corset, but were wearing modest, long dresses or a combination of a blouse and a long skirt that emphasized the figure, sometimes in combination with hats (Figure 1). Middle-class men were often dressed in suits, sometimes three-piece, with trousers, vest, and jacket, with a cravat or bow tie, or simpler suits in brighter colors with button-down shirts with collar and tie. Parents dressed their children in gendered apparel. Although often shorter, girls' dresses were similar to women's dresses. The boys' outfits mirrored the male fashion, including a collared shirt, a cravat, a jacket, and a hat, often with short instead of long trousers. The sailor suit that had become popular in Imperial Germany for boys, and with a skirt for girls, in the first half of the twentieth century was equally adopted by Jewish middle-class families.⁴⁴ Many Jews dressed up on Sundays, when they had previously worn their weekday clothes.⁴⁵

Founded in 1912, *Blau-Weiss* opposed the liberal and utilitarian middle class in Germany, an aspiration shared by the broader youth movement in Germany and in Europe at the time. The youth revolted against their parents' generation and propagated romantic ideals of nature and the withdrawal from a "materialistic civilization."⁴⁶ *Blau-Weiss* wanted to become visible as "Jewish," while at the same time being loyal to Germany: "Critical of their parents both for abandoning Judaism in the haste to acclimate to German culture, and for personifying materialist bourgeois lifestyles, *Blau-Weiss* members sought to be better Germans by being better Jews."⁴⁷ In this early phase, *Blau-Weiss* deemed two elements crucial in the envisaged "inner" (mental) and "outer" (bodily) transformation. First was the experience of hiking in nature as a community, which was complemented by a wide range of physical and communal activities. *Blau-Weiss* was inspired by the nationalist German youth movement *Wandervogel*, which propagated the idea of developing a new way of living for the bourgeois youth through hiking in nature.⁴⁸ Choosing functional hiking outfits for the *Wandervogel*, dress also played an important role in expressing their aims.⁴⁹ The boys wore hiking

⁴² Franz Meyer, "Der Breslauer Bund," *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 10, 11.

⁴³ Lowenstein, "German Jews and Their Social Relationships," 160.

⁴⁴ Marion Kaplan, ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1618-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), 180.

⁴⁵ Lowenstein, "German Jews and Their Social Relationships," 160.

⁴⁶ Laquer, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung*, 14-16.

⁴⁷ Sharfman, "Between Identities," 200.

⁴⁸ Georg Todtmann, "Was wir wollen," *Blau-Weiß Blätter*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 2, May 1914, 2-4; Joseph Marcus, "Wanderpflichten," *Blau-Weiß Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 6, September 1913, 5; Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 8; Moses Calvary, "Erziehungsprobleme des jüdischen Jugendwanderns," *Führerzeitung*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 1, June 1917, 4-5; Sharfman, "Between Identities," 202.

⁴⁹ Erich Weniger, "Die Jugendbewegung und ihre kulturelle Auswirkung," in *Geist der Gegenwart*, Stuttgarter Verlagsinstitut GmbH, 1928. Quote in *Dokumentation der Jugendbewegung*, vol. 1: *Grundschriften der deutschen Jugendbewegung*, ed. Werner Kindt (Diederichs, Düsseldorf, 1963), 546; Michael Parmentier, "Der Stil der



Figure 1. Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), Schild-Scheier family collection, AR 6263, album “Traveling in Europe and via Iceland to New York, 1907–1914,” 42, F15737, Schild-Scheier family in Friedrichsroda, 1913.

boots, short loden trousers and loden jackets, often with a hat. Dating back to the sixteenth century and gaining in popularity since the nineteenth century, loden was a waterproof material, first made of sheep wool dyed in different colors, that originated from the Tyrol region of Austria. Evolving into an alpaca, camel hair, and mohair mixture in the twentieth century, loden became more widely used across Europe.⁵⁰ Although the *Wandervogel* officially rejected the dress codes of the urban middle class, it seems as if some male members continued to wear cravats, even on hikes (Figure 2); in photographs taken on occasions such as the “Gautag,” an official gathering, members even combined bow ties with their hiking gear, and sailor suits were integrated into the outfits (Figure 3). Members expressed romantic ideals through elements of traditional German folk costumes. Both in Germany and wider central Europe, folk costumes (*Trachten*) played an important role in constructing and performing national identities.⁵¹ They allowed the wearer to express belonging to a specific national or “ethnic” group and were also widely used as a form of leisure dress.⁵² For boys in the *Wandervogel*, this sometimes meant the integration of regional costumes such as Bavarian hats with feathers. Girls were often portrayed in long dresses, even when on hikes, their hair in braids and often with wreaths of flowers on their heads (Figure 4).⁵³

While the *Wandervogel* envisaged a German nationalist transformation, *Blau-Weiss* wanted to develop a new Jewish, Zionist counter-image to antisemitic (body) images through hiking

Wandervögel. Analyse einer jugendlichen Subkultur und ihrer Entwicklung,” *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 30 (1984) 4: 519–32, esp. 526–27.

⁵⁰ “Loden coat,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/loden-coat>).

⁵¹ Regina Bendix, “Moral Integrity in Costumed Identity: Negotiating ‘National Costume’ in 19th-Century Bavaria,” *Journal of American Folklore* 111, 440 (1998): 133–45; Alexander Maxwell, *Patriots Against Fashion: Clothing and Nationalism in Europe’s Age of Revolutions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 155.

⁵² Gerda Buxbaum, *Mode aus Wien, 1815–1938* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1986), 333; Rebecca Houze, *Textiles, Fashion, and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary Before the First World War: Principles of Dress* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 274–77. I sincerely thank Jonathan Kaplan for pointing me to the references on the theme of *Trachten*.

⁵³ For example: Adjb, F 1/16/01; Adjb, F1/12/04; Adjb, F1/34/06; Adjb, F1/33/05.



Figure 2. Archiv der deutschen Jugendbewegung (Adjb), Sign. F1/17/01, Julius Groß, “Aufnahmen des Alt-Wandervogels (AWV) in Berlin” (photographs of the *Alt-Wandervogel* in Berlin), 1911.



Figure 3. Adjb, Sign. FA/08/01, Julius Groß, “Gautag des Wandervogel e.V. in Berlin” (*Gautag* of the *Wandervogel* in Berlin), Große Heide, 1913.

in nature.⁵⁴ Education was important in this metamorphosis, specifically the ideals of philosopher Martin Buber, for whom questions of personal identity and spirituality lay at the

⁵⁴ See, for example, Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 6, 20; Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar: Vom Leben der Jüngerer im Blau-Weiss*, (Berlin, Verlag, 1925), 50.



Figure 4. AdjB, Sign. F1/04/03, Julius Groß, “Frühlingsfahrt des Alt-Wandervogels (AVV) zum Landheim Hanschenland in Brandenburg” (Spring trip of the Alt-Wandervogel (AVV) to the Landheim Hanschenland in Brandenburg), 1915, no. 3.

core of Zionism, rather than political solutions.⁵⁵ *Blau-Weiss* saw the transformation as an emotional and sensual development: “The Jewish goal is the anchoring of Jewish emotional values: Jewish self-confidence, Jewish sense of responsibility and Jewish sense of belonging.”⁵⁶ In this early stage, a strong bond with German culture and nature, perceived as “*Heimat*,” was not seen as contradicting a desired Jewish homeland in Palestine.⁵⁷ As Jan Rybak has shown for east central Europe, Zionists were primarily engaged in a “nation building project in their own spaces,” which was not merely seen as a preparatory step for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.⁵⁸ In their desire to create a German-Jewish identity, the *Blau-Weiss* leaders intended to come to Palestine only for occasional visits. In their view, eastern European Jews should be the ones settling the land.⁵⁹

Blau-Weiss wanted the transformation and the new “Jewishness” to be noticeable. “The *Blau-Weiss* member shall be proud and happy when he thinks of being a Jew. He shall know why he is hiking in a Jewish hiking club and should confess himself of being a Jew on hikes and return greetings of “*Heil*” by the *Wandervogel* by “*Shalom*,”⁶⁰ stated the

⁵⁵ Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 204.

⁵⁶ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 7.

⁵⁷ Jüdischen Wanderbund “Blau-Weiss,” Berlin, ed., *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines Jüdischen Wanderbundes “Blau-Weiß”* (Berlin, November 1913), 10.

⁵⁸ Jan Rybak, *Everyday Zionism in East-Central Europe: Nation-Building in War and Revolution, 1914–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 5.

⁵⁹ Kunze, *Jugendkulturelle Blicke auf Palästina*, 31; Miriam Rürup, “Gefundene Heimat? Palästinafahrten national-jüdischer deutscher Studentenverbindungen 1913/1914,” in *Leipziger Beiträge zur jüdischen Geschichte und Kultur* 2 (2004): 167–89.

⁶⁰ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 6, 7.

Blau-Weiss leadership in 1917. It was not only greetings and Jewish songs that would signify “Jewishness,” but the exposure of the dressed body. The body was seen as the visible form of the desired transformation of the Jewish members. On the one hand, it was meant to express the new relationship of the Jew with nature, far away from the urban middle class; on the other hand, the transformed body should manifest discipline and the ability to look after oneself.⁶¹ The First World War was a turning point for *Blau-Weiss* and the broader German Zionist movement. The favorable political circumstances in the British Mandate and the Balfour declaration led to a new call for migration to Palestine. From 1918 onward, *Blau-Weiss* called for the practical realization of Zionism, leading to conflicts with the ZVfD, whose members doubted the feasibility of the intended settlement. During that time, *Blau Weiss* developed into a more “tightly knit Bund” and emphasized the need for discipline and militancy. Not individual transformation, but strengthening the identification with the group and community, was now the priority. Settlement in Palestine became the major task now.⁶² In Prunn, in 1922, *Blau-Weiss* officially separated from the German Zionists over the question of emigration; its leader Walter Moses claimed that the movement would now become an independent and militant “Bund of action.”⁶³ These changes marked a generational shift within *Blau-Weiss*. Although the earlier generation had wanted to move away from the political Zionism of Theodor Herzl, which had aimed to realize a Jewish homeland through diplomatic means, through a more practical approach, the new generation went further by wanting to transform Zionism into an “emigration movement.”⁶⁴ *Blau-Weiss* now became more exclusive, forbidding membership of any other Zionist groups and adhering to authoritarian rules.⁶⁵ During this time, a separate *Blau-Weiss* hiking club for girls was also established.⁶⁶ *Blau-Weiss* members started settling in Palestine in 1923; from 1924 onward a willingness to migrate became a requirement. The settlement led to new conflicts in the British Mandate for Palestine. The Zionist organizations led by socialist eastern European settlers did not fit with the agenda of the *Blau-Weiss* members, who envisaged a leadership role while preserving their German heritage. Their unwillingness to learn Hebrew, their dislike of the socialist Zionists and resultant conflicts led to the failure of the settlement project, with many *Blau-Weiss* members returning to Germany in 1925. *Blau-Weiss* was dissolved in February 1927, with many members having already joined the new Jewish Youth movement “Kadima” in 1926.⁶⁷

How to Dress as a *Blau-Weiss* Member: Forging a New Visual Identity

It may be that we looked very weird at first. I sent in a picture myself for the exhibition of one of the first hiking groups, where dear friends appeared in straw hats and others with mandarin collars and ties. Soon, however, the shimmer collar became modern and gradually we got a more uniform look.⁶⁸

With these words, in 1962, Franz Meyer looked back at dress in the early days of the *Blau-Weiss* movement. First, we learn that in the beginning, there was no consensus

⁶¹ Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar*, 1, 2, 16–18.

⁶² Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 209, 212.

⁶³ Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 211; Brenner, “Turning Inward,” 60–62; Trefz, *Jugendbewegung und Juden in Deutschland*, 23.

⁶⁴ On this generational shift see also Dorf Michaelis, “Unser grosses Erlebnis,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 22. Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 214.

⁶⁵ Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 212, 213.

⁶⁶ “Der Mädchenbund,” *Blau-Weiss-Blätter*, Führerzeitung, Jahrgang 3, Nr. 2, 1922, 31; Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 46, 47n183.

⁶⁷ Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 220, 221; Pilarczyk, *Gemeinschaft in Bildern*, 44, 46.

⁶⁸ Franz Meyer, “Der Breslauer Bund,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 10, 11.

among the group members as to what the “appropriate” way of dressing was. The members had chosen different outfits for the hike and the photograph taken. As Entwistle has shown, notions of appropriateness are related to a specific social context. The uncertainty regarding the outfits can also be understood as an uncertainty about the social context. Was the relevant social context the German middle class with its prevailing dress codes, other German hiking clubs such as the *Wandervogel*, or an imagined new Jewish context that was yet to be created?

In 1913, one year after the foundation of the movement, Karl Glaser described in the *Blau-Weiss Blätter* the appropriate dress for hiking as a *Blau-Weiss* member.⁶⁹ His article shows that this matter was considered important, but at the same time needed to be defined. Glaser highlighted two requirements: first, the dress should be functional when going on hikes and, second, one should come across as well dressed. This was particularly important for Jews: “We are used to dressing in a respectable and functional manner everywhere—so why not so on the hiking trip?... We need to look respectable—and we need to fit into the landscape. Everyone will approach you in a much friendlier way, and you will have double the pleasure.”⁷⁰

He made clear that Jews should dress according to the dress codes of the Germans—or ideally better than them. Only this would be seen as “appropriate.” He then gave advice on what would be considered functional and appropriate—and thus the best—clothing. This way of dressing was also linked to “authenticity,” as if this was proof of the successful (bodily) transformation of the wearer who had distanced himself from the image of the “Jewish thinker.” The “real hiker” wears “a soft wool shirt with a soft turn-down collar, cotton lower leg dresses, rough woolen stockings and lace-up shoes with double soles and a straw insert. There are also short loden trousers with stockings or long trousers with wrap canvas or leather gaiters, a loden jacket, a wide-brimmed loden hat and a loden cape.”⁷¹ This shows that it was through such publications that already commonly known dress items were labeled as “authentic,” “functional,” and “appropriate” for the *Blau-Weiss* members. Glaser paid tribute to the German *Wandervogel* for having introduced a specific hiking outfit and encouraged the *Blau-Weiss* members to go to designated shops that had recently opened.⁷² He thus made clear that *Blau-Weiss*, in 1913, tried to copy the outfits of the German hiking club. With this, he opted for the adaptation of the nationally connoted German hiking costume, expressing loyalty to German culture. During this phase, photographs taken on hikes and gatherings indicate that the ideals communicated may have differed from the styles adopted when photographed, during this early phase. Members probably combined clothes they had at home with items of the hiking outfit described by Glaser and, as indicated by Franz Meyer, they also experimented with outfits. The *Blau-Weiss* boys (Figure 5), for example, are wearing short loden trousers and stockings, combined with regular white buttoned shirts, with open collars. Hats were recommended, but not worn by all *Blau-Weiss* members. Although their clothes slightly differed from the described ideal, the boys are dressed in a similar way, creating a uniform appearance that made them recognizable as a group. Inspiration was also drawn from the *Wandervogel* in the introduction of a pin, the *Blau-Weiss Nadel*, in 1913.⁷³ It was awarded to *Blau-Weiss* members who had taken part in ten hikes. It was a small symbol made up of two diagonally

⁶⁹ Karl Glaser, “Von der Wanderkleidung, I.,” *Blau Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Heft 1, April 1913, 2–3. The booklet for *Blau-Weiss* leaders from November 1913, “Guidelines for the Foundation of a Jewish Hiking Group *Blau-Weiss*,” stated the same ideals. Jüdischen Wanderbund “*Blau-Weiss*,” Berlin, *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines jüdischen Wanderbundes “Blau-Weiß,”* 2, 3, 10.

⁷⁰ Glaser, “Von der Wanderkleidung, I.,” 2, 3.

⁷¹ Glaser, “Von der Wanderkleidung I.,” 2; see also Jüdischen Wanderbund “*Blau-Weiss*,” Berlin, *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines jüdischen Wanderbundes “Blau-Weiß,”* 10.

⁷² Glaser, “Von der Wanderkleidung I.,” 3.

⁷³ Jüdischen Wanderbund “*Blau-Weiss*,” Berlin, *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines jüdischen Wanderbundes “Blau-Weiß,”* 9.



Figure 5. LBI, Rudolf and Rudolphina Menzel Collection, AR 25014/F 32753, Blau-Weiss youth group marching.

separated colored areas in blue and white (Figure 6). As a pin, it was attached to the jacket and as a symbol inserted on the cover pages of the first issues of the *Blau-Weiss Blätter*.⁷⁴ On the one hand, the pin was meant to serve as an identification mark to allow others to recognize the *Blau-Weiss* members. Yet, because it was small, one had to be very close to the wearer to be able to recognize it. Furthermore, some knowledge of the *Blau-Weiss* movement was needed to understand its meaning. On the other hand, the pin was directed toward the movement's members, to strengthen their "Korpsgeist," the esprit de corps, as the movement's guidelines formulated in 1913.⁷⁵ It was seen as a symbol to represent the—inner and outer—transformation of the *Blau-Weiss* members. From 1914, the *Blau-Weiss* leaders increasingly emphasized that the recipients of the pin were expected to exhibit "appropriate behavior and appearance": it is "an award that is only given to those who we trust will always behave in a blue and white manner."⁷⁶

Blau-Weiss explicitly explained to the female *Blau-Weiss* members how to dress. A separate *Blau-Weiss Mädchenbund* (girls' group) was only established in 1922. Before that, even though hiking groups for girls existed, boys and girls would meet during their breaks or hike together if not enough leaders were available.⁷⁷ Entwistle emphasized that notions of appropriateness not only depended on the social context, but also largely differed according to gender. This concerns both the question of what is seen as appropriate apparel and the fact that gender is actively reproduced through dress.⁷⁸ In 1913, Edith Henschel, a female leader in the movement, addressed the girls, emphasizing the need to dress appropriately for outdoor activities. In so doing, she communicated the ideals that had also been formulated internally in the "guidelines for the foundation" of *Blau-Weiss*.⁷⁹ We cannot know to what extent the instructions resulted from previous experiences. They reveal the importance of aesthetic, "fashionable" dress for women, while at the same time establishing

⁷⁴ Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 9n5.

⁷⁵ Jüdischen Wanderbund "Blau-Weiss," Berlin, *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines Jüdischen Wanderbundes "Blau-Weiß,"* 6.

⁷⁶ Todtmann, "Blau-Weißer," 9; see also Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss*, 10, 11.

⁷⁷ Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 46, 47n183.

⁷⁸ Entwistle, "The Dressed Body," 53.

⁷⁹ Jüdischen Wanderbund "Blau-Weiss," Berlin, *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines Jüdischen Wanderbundes "Blau-Weiß,"*



Figure 6. LBI, Blau-Weiss Collection, 1924–1925, AR 2892, pin with the Blau-Weiss symbol, probably of Blau-Weiss leader Eli Schachtel.

new notions of appropriateness within *Blau-Weiss*.⁸⁰ In 1913, Henschel formulated expectations by giving examples of inappropriate items such as jewelry, handbags, and fur collars; she stated that only a “functional dress” would be considered beautiful in this context: sturdy shoes, a skirt made of loden that could be opened on the side, and a loden coat, which was seen as the most important element, combined with a simple blouse or sweater. If needed, short and slim sport shorts could be worn.⁸¹ Henschel called for a swift change in dress: “We as female leaders would appreciate if you would come to our hikes dressed like this very soon.”⁸² In addition to recommendations for shops where one could buy these items, the girls were advised to put these on the wish list as a birthday present or for Hanukkah, when, as in the Christian tradition of Christmas, presents are given to children.⁸³ Most urgent, according to Henschel, was the acquirement of a loden hat, which would make the members recognizable as a group: “Now we talk about hats, that due to their colors and different shapes are the items that most clearly lead a uniform appearance, even of the smallest group of female hikers.”⁸⁴ The hat that she recommended would be sold at the next group’s gathering and the girls were urged to buy one.⁸⁵ In the photograph (Figure 7), likely taken before 1915, the girls are wearing elements of the loden dress, solid hiking boots, long skirts made of loden, and a loden jacket.

Some of the girls complemented these with hats. Elegant accessories are limited to flowers on the hat; one girl is wearing a bow in her hair. Four of the girls are holding hiking sticks in their hands. One of the girls is wearing an open collared white shirt with a neckerchief, popular in other hiking groups such as the Boy Scouts; two other girls are wearing woolen sweaters with collared shirts underneath or closed jackets. The picture indicates that girls were adapting the functional dress that was considered appropriate for hiking. Yet, the

⁸⁰ On the role of girls and gender-related issues in the broader German-Jewish youth movement, see Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, “‘Die ‘Mädelfrage.’ Zu den Geschlechterbeziehungen in der deutsch-jüdischen Jugendbewegung,” in *Jüdische Welten. Juden in Deutschland vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, ed. Beate Meyer and Marion Kaplan (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 136–54; Irmgard Klönne, *Jugend weiblich und bewegt. Mädchen und Frauen in der deutschen Jugendbewegung* (Berlin: Verlag der Jugendbewegung, 2020); Pilarczyk, *Gemeinschaft in Bildern*, 86.

⁸¹ Edith Henschel, “Von der Wanderkleidung, II.” *Blau Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Heft 1, April 1913, 3; see also Jüdischen Wanderbund “Blau-Weiss,” Berlin, ed., *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines Jüdischen Wanderbundes “Blau-Weiß,”* 10.

⁸² Henschel, “Von der Wanderkleidung, II.,” 3.

⁸³ Henschel, “Von der Wanderkleidung, II.,” 3.

⁸⁴ Henschel, “Von der Wanderkleidung, II.,” 3.

⁸⁵ Henschel, “Von der Wanderkleidung, II.,” 3.



Figure 7. LBI, Rudolf and Rudolphina Menzel Collection, AR 25014, F 32765, Blau-Weiss youth group.

accessories show that some leeway was taken to integrate elegant elements into the outfit. Despite some differences, the girls adopted a similar way of dressing and are recognizable as a group. For the girls, who were expected to dress in a feminine and elegant way, the change from bourgeois dress to the required functional hiking outfit may have been more drastic than for boys whose everyday outfits were already more functional. It is therefore likely that the girls' regular outfits could not easily be integrated into the new hiking outfits and that some more flexibility was given with regard to the level of uniformity. *Blau-Weiss*, in contrast to the *Wandervogel*, wanted to establish a functional loden outfit for girls. Yet, photographs exhibit *Blau-Weiss* girls in elegant long dresses with embroideries, their hair in braids, often decorated with wreaths of flowers that were very similar to the traditional German way the girls in the *Wandervogel* dressed (Figure 8).⁸⁶ As a *Blau-Weiss* girl reported in the movement's publication in 1916: "We spent our time weaving wreaths, which we decorated with red chains of red rowan berries and, when the boys finally arrived, we girls we sprang toward them adorned with wreaths of heather."⁸⁷

In both articles from 1913, when the movement had already been hiking or a while, the leaders tried to articulate new and clear definitions of the appropriate way of dressing. During this early period, the leaders justified the need to establish a distinct outfit in three ways: first, to differentiate the *Blau-Weiss* members from their parents. Adopting the outfits of the nationalist German *Wandervogel* signified a break with the Jewish middle-class values at home. Second, to make sure that the *Blau-Weiss* members were well and appropriately dressed—specifically as Jews. There was a strong desire to fit into German society by dressing accordingly in order to avoid any negative attention and thus to counter antisemitic stereotypes. And third, to create a sense of group belonging through dress and items such as the pin, both directed inward toward the members and outward. The guidance led the members to dress in a similar way, resulting in a more uniform group appearance that

⁸⁶ Figure 7 is probably from April 1918; see CZA A 66/117/02/000002; also see CZA A 66/80/0000014; CZA A66/54/02/000006.

⁸⁷ Frieda Rosenow, "Fahrt in die Heide," *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Führernummer, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 2, 1917, 12–14, quoted in Klönne, *Jugend weiblich und bewegt*, 66.



Figure 8. Salomon Ludwig Steinheim Institut für deutsch-jüdische Geschichte, Gidal-Bildarchiv, Sign. 2641 “Breslauer Gruppe des Jugendbundes Blau-Weiss” (Breslau group of the youth association Blau-Weiss. Without year (likely 1918, see CZA).

represented strength. The new way of dressing, even if not made explicit in this early phase, also seemed to fulfill a disciplinary and unifying character.

Choosing a specific way of dressing to become visible as “Jewish” and “Zionist” gained in importance in the following years for *Blau-Weiss*. The so called *Blau-Weiss-Führer* published guidelines in 1917 to train the leaders of the movement for their work with the young *Blau-Weiss* members. Expectations regarding appropriate dress for both boys and girls were formulated.⁸⁸ Although these were similar to the ideals devised in 1913, the “appropriate dress” was now a requirement for taking part in the activities of the movement. Among the reasons given was that *Blau-Weiss* should be able to compete with and be taken seriously by other non-Jewish hiking clubs.⁸⁹ The importance of the pin to express loyalty with the movement and testify to “impeccable behavior” was further strengthened.⁹⁰

The *Wandervogel* served as an orientation, but *Blau-Weiss* now made explicit how it wanted to differ from it. Both in 1913 and 1917, the *Blau-Weiss* claimed that it would only take the pin as an inspiration from the *Wandervogel* to strengthen feelings of group belonging, while it would reject their uniformity.⁹¹ *Blau-Weiss* justified the latter position by stating that any military notions should be avoided out of pedagogical considerations and “especially for Jews.”⁹² It was specifically in the German army during the First World War that Jews were experiencing exclusion and antisemitic attacks, with German nationalism on the rise.⁹³

Forging these new ideals and dissociating from the German nationalist hiking groups was a complex process; items and modes of dress had no meaning in themselves, it needed to be attributed and perpetuated. What was to be rejected as “German nationalist dress,” and which elements could be adapted and charged with new Jewish, Zionist meaning? Uniformity was a particularly charged issue. *Blau-Weiss* officially rejected uniformity, but wanted dress to serve a unifying function directed both inward and outward. Dating back to the early years of the movement, it became even more apparent after the First World War.

What *Blau-Weiss* perceived as the ideal dress changed after the First World War to the extent that the movement developed into a more disciplined authoritarian “Bund.” The urge to advocate for migration to Palestine was accompanied by the desire to distinguish

⁸⁸ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 13.

⁸⁹ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 13.

⁹⁰ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 10, 17.

⁹¹ Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 8.

⁹² Bundesleitung Berlin, *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 8. See also *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 6, September 1913, 2.

⁹³ Derek J. Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2013), 166–94.

the group more explicitly from the German youth movements such as the *Wandervogel*. Militaristic elements that had been officially rejected were now introduced under the banner of a Jewish nationalist goal. *Blau-Weiss* saw settlement in Palestine as a break with the bourgeois lifestyle and emphasized the rupture both with previous religious traditions and the eastern European Jews who many German Jews saw as “backward.”⁹⁴

Following the First World War, *Blau-Weiss* established the outfit that its members would later refer to as the *Kluft*, German for what could be translated as “uniform.” In 1925, a publication by the national leadership for the 10- to 15-year-old members, who were called *Hamischmar*, outlined the characteristics of the new official outfit that was expected to be worn by every male member.⁹⁵ Now the term *Tracht* was used. Originally referring to attire worn on a regular basis, the additional connotation of *Tracht* as folk costume, expressing regional or national belonging to a group, seems crucial in this context.⁹⁶ By using this term, the leaders conveyed that they now saw themselves as a specific community, differing clearly from German society and other hiking groups. Now the items were not supposed to be made of loden anymore, but of gray corduroy, called *Manchester* due to its English origin, a durable fabric woven with three sets of yarns and vertical ribs.⁹⁷ With corduroy gaining in popularity in central Europe around this time, *Blau-Weiss* may have adhered to these new dress modes. Yet, it is noticeable that, even in the winter, the wearing of loden was now explicitly forbidden, which may point to a conscious demarcation from the nationally connotated German fabric.⁹⁸ Every single item of the outfit—from the gray jacket to the navy shirt and black or gray socks—was described and outlined in detail, even the required number of pockets; the authors gave guidance for both the summer and the winter season.⁹⁹ In choosing terms such as *Kluftjackete* (meaning the jacket that was part of the *Blau-Weiss* uniform), specific terms were introduced for the items now mandatory for every member.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the required items, it was specified that a corduroy belt should complement the outfit, and the kind of equipment the young *Blau-Weiss* members should have in their pockets was detailed.¹⁰¹ The publication gave the following reasons for the requirement to wear the outfit, now seen as the symbol of the movement: “The uniformity (of the outfit) is the external expression of the movement. The outfit is also the external characteristic through which *Blau-Weiss* differentiates itself from the society in which middle it lives.”¹⁰² Uniformity in dress was now the explicit goal. A new nationalist, Zionist, meaning was attributed to dress now that the establishment of a separate Jewish nationalist context and geographical space seemed within reach. In a speech, printed in an advertising booklet for *Blau-Weiss* in 1925, Ferdinand Ostertag added another purpose of the *Kluft*: “We want to differentiate ourselves from the others, not only out of functional reasons..., but also out of the pleasure to offend the others.”¹⁰³ Although this was likely a rhetorical provocation, it testifies to *Blau-Weiss*’s determination to distance itself not only from the German surroundings but probably also from Jews outside of *Blau-Weiss*.

The desired uniformity in dress can only be identified to a certain degree in photographs taken of *Blau-Weiss* members in the 1920s. A photograph from Munich shows a group of male *Blau-Weiss* members in 1923 (Figure 9). The man sitting on the carriage is wearing a

⁹⁴ Sharfman, “Between Identities,” 213, 214; Trefz, *Jugendbewegung und Juden in Deutschland*, 74.

⁹⁵ Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41.

⁹⁶ Buxbaum, *Mode aus Wien, 1815–1938*, 329.

⁹⁷ “Corduroy,” in *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*, ed. Valerie Steele (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005), 1:289–90.

⁹⁸ Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41.

⁹⁹ Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41.

¹⁰⁰ Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41.

¹⁰¹ Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41, 43.

¹⁰² Bundesleitung des Blau-Wiess, ed., *Hamischmar*, 41.

¹⁰³ Ferdinand Ostertag, “Worte zur Eröffnung des Bundestages in Gross-Obisch,” *Blau-Weiss-Blätter, Neue Folge*, Jahrgang 2, Blau-Weiss-Werbeheft, 1925, 2–5, esp. 3.



Figure 9. Gidal-Bildarchiv, Sign. 2400, “Eine Münchner Blau Weiss-Gruppe auf großer Fahrt nach Franken, 1923” (Blau-Weiss group from Munich on a trip to Franconia, 1923).

combination of clothes that match the requirements of the *Kluft*; a hat, likely made of fabric, and what looks like a loden jacket are combined with short trousers, stockings, and robust hiking boots. In the picture of six *Blau-Weiss* members from Frankfurt, sitting around a bonfire in 1924, only one member is dressed according to the ideals outlined previously (Figure 10). The boy on the right is wearing short trousers, with stockings and hiking boots. He is wearing a jacket and a hat, both not made of loden but a lighter fabric that cannot clearly be identified as corduroy. As Ulrike Pilarczyk has highlighted, many members of youth groups took pride in wearing short trousers, even in colder weather.¹⁰⁴ This further supports the close interconnection between body and dress. It also shows that the members likely adapted the meaning and the symbolic function of the idealized outfit that went beyond the function “to keep oneself warm.” However, other members were choosing clothes that did not match the ideal *Kluft*. Woolen sweaters and simple jackets, in addition to long or sometimes short trousers and stockings with hiking shoes, can be identified in other pictures. The girls are also depicted in functional hiking dress, sometimes in trousers, sometimes with skirts. Although the outfits did not always fulfill all criteria of the *Kluft*, items seen as “bourgeois dress items” such as cravats, bow ties, and starched collars were usually not worn and elegant items and accessories seemed to have declined in popularity.¹⁰⁵

While in 1914 the orientation toward the German *Wandervogel* and dressing appropriately within German society had been emphasized, along with wanting to be different from the parents’ generation, the outfit now aimed at expressing membership of the Zionist movement and differentiation from German society. This reflected the renewed goal to settle in Palestine and thus to separate from German society. The more uniform look and the

¹⁰⁴ Pilarczyk, *Gemeinschaft in Bildern*, 62, 63.

¹⁰⁵ For boys e.g. CZA, A 66/ CZA A 66/80/0000037; CZA A 66/80/0000038; CZA A 66/80/0000039; CZA A 66/80/0000040; CZA A 66/8/0000049; A66/54/02/000003; A66/77/15; A66/113/000014 (1922–1924); A 66/117/01/000003; A 66/117/01/000003; A 66/117/01/000009. For girls e.g. CZA A 66/80/0000037; CZA A66/96/10000021 (also Gidal Bildarchiv, Sign. 2638); CZA A66/96/10000033; A66/96/10000048; A 66/115/1/000036.



Figure 10. Gidal-Bildarchiv, Sign. 1061, “Frankfurter Gruppe des Jugendbundes Blau Weiss am Lagerfeuer, 1924” (Frankfurt group of the youth association Blau Weiss around the campfire, 1924).

new meaning that was attributed to the outfit can be understood as an expression of a newly imagined and created social context—now seen as a specific Jewish context—with its own notions of appropriateness.

It is likely that the imagination of this new context and the Zionist uniform was more important than the actual differences in dress in comparison with non-Jewish hiking groups. Ultimately, the uniform consisted of items that had been introduced and used by German hiking groups. Although the choice of dress was supposed to make the group recognizable as Jewish, it was still situated in the context of a “German fashion system,” including the availability of clothing, but also notions of what was perceived as appropriate. This became clear once *Blau-Weiss* members started settling in Palestine, where they were aiming to live as a distinct German-Jewish group; many of them refused to learn Hebrew or adapt to the very different living conditions among the mostly eastern European settlers and the local Arab population.

Dress as an Embodied Practice: Anchoring and Perpetuating the New Ideals

In his memoirs, published in 1971, former *Blau-Weiss* member Joseph Dunner writes: “Here (in the *Blau-Weiss* movement) I learned that only the petty bourgeois are wearing hats and that an open collar is more sensible than a starched shirt with a tie.”¹⁰⁶ Among several things he recalls having learned, the establishment of new dress ideals is the first point that he raises. It is difficult to tell if this points to a specific connection between personal memories and the dress that was worn at the time or the importance the movement attributed to this theme. *Blau-Weiss* leaders took a variety of measures to establish the changing sartorial ideals throughout the movement’s existence. The *Blau-Weiss* publications played a key role in perpetuating and enforcing the ideals and related expectations; former *Blau-Weiss* members Dan Frankel and Dolf Michaelis both emphasized the importance of the *Blätter*, especially for older members.¹⁰⁷ In these publications, the tone changed

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Dunner, *Zu Protokoll gegeben. Mein Leben als Deutscher und Jude* (Munich: Desch, 1971), 44.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Dan Frankel, in *Ausgewählte Interviews von Ehemaligen der jüdischen Jugendbewegung in Deutschland von 1913–1933*, ed. Jutta Hetkamp (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 1994), 103; Michaelis, “Mein Blau-Weiss Erlebnis,” 52.

according to the importance that was attributed to dress. In Glaser's and Henschel's articles from 1913, the first guidelines on dress were formulated as recommendations, although the tone, in a humorous way, made clear that social consequences in the groups may follow if the members did not dress accordingly. Glaser and Henschel encouraged the children to ask their parents to buy the right clothes for them and labeled only functional outfits as appropriate and beautiful. The authors tried to provoke the fear of looking "ridiculous" and different within the group. In addition, the authors emphasized the risk of peer pressure.¹⁰⁸ Glaser wrote: "You now have heard what such great leaders think about hiking outfits. From now on no one will dare to approach us with his red student cap, otherwise it may happen that it will be buried somewhere in the forest.... He will then be able to buy a hat at our next gathering."¹⁰⁹

The student cap, *Schülermütze*, was worn by pupils in Germany with colors according to school and grade.¹¹⁰ By emphasizing that this would be "inappropriate" headwear within the *Blau-Weiss* movement, he made clear that the hiking club should be seen as a distinct social context, different from the German school, with specific dress codes. In publications, readers were also made aware of the existence of an equipment list, *Ausrüstungszettel*, that would be handed out to help members to know what the appropriate dress was and to prepare for the hikes accordingly.¹¹¹

The tone changed in 1917. Where previously options were given to choose from the wardrobe one had at home, it was now mandatory to own and wear specific items. However, the loden hat that had been a requirement in 1913 seemed to be optional in 1917. The guidance made clear that it was now explicitly forbidden to bring items on hikes that had previously been considered "unpractical," such as umbrellas, school caps, straw hats, jewelry, or handbags. It was made clear that "hikers who were not appropriately dressed would be rejected."¹¹² These instructions also implied that the *Blau-Weiss* movement was now seen as a "distinct social context" with its own notions of appropriate dress. In 1925, the guidance published in *Hamischmar* read like a commandment, emphasizing the importance of body care, and especially the boys' appearance: "Every boy shall learn how to look after himself. He takes care of his body and health. He looks after his clothing and hates uncleanness."¹¹³

In addition to the publications, leaders and external experts gave talks on the themes of body care and dressing. In 1914, leaders were educated on themes such as "foot care," "dental care," "body care and clothing" and were expected to pass this knowledge on to the *Blau-Weiss* members.¹¹⁴ Although the writer admitted that these themes could be seen as trivial by some readers, he implied that the importance of these themes for the core values of *Blau-Weiss* should be clear to every leader.¹¹⁵ We see here, as highlighted by Gillerman, the importance of both body and dress as an arena for the improvement of the individual and the collective Jewish body—and the expectation that the members would be aware of this.

Like the Boy Scout movement, *Blau-Weiss* introduced a system of entrance rituals, tests, and criteria for advancement, acknowledging specific skills and loyalty to the movement. Especially after 1918 with the strengthening of rigid structures, a strict system of criteria and tests to join and move up in the hierarchy was introduced. The examination system had different levels that the young *Blau-Weiss* members could achieve gradually. Knowledge of the appropriate outfit for different seasons and weather conditions as well

¹⁰⁸ Henschel, "Von der Wanderkleidung, II., 3.

¹⁰⁹ Glaser, "Von der Wanderkleidung I," 4.

¹¹⁰ Michael Freyer, "Geschichte der Schülerkleidung," in *Handbuch der Geschichte des Bayerischen Bildungswesens*, ed. Max Liedtke (Bad Heilbrunn/Obb.: Klinkhardt, 1997), 4:273–99.

¹¹¹ Todtmann, "Blau-Weißer," 10; see also Jüdischen Wanderbund "Blau-Weiss," Berlin, ed., *Leitfaden für die Gründung eines Jüdischen Wanderbundes "Blau-Weiß"*, 10.

¹¹² *Blau-Weiss Führer*, 13.

¹¹³ Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar*, 40, 57, 59, 337, 341.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Marcus, "Der Führer," *Blau Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 2, May 1914, 7, 8.

¹¹⁵ Marcus, "Der Führer," 8.

as skills to alter and fix clothing were tested. It was specifically the first exam that required comprehensive knowledge of the *Blau-Weiss* outfit, how to wear it, and how to take care of it: "The examined hiker must exhibit a well-founded knowledge of costume and equipment."¹¹⁶ According to the booklet, this included not only a justification of why certain items were part of the *Tracht*, but also profound knowledge on the proper care for and maintenance of the clothes.¹¹⁷ Expectations around fixing clothes were gendered. Although boys were expected to acquire these skills themselves, to do so, they were encouraged to ask their mother or "any girl" to show them how to do it.¹¹⁸ Yet, it seems as if "appropriate outward appearance" and looking after oneself were seen as crucial now, leading to the expectation that boys would acquire the necessary skills. *Blau-Weiss* also incorporated similar skills such as "knitting, sewing, crocheting, knitting, darning" into the activities and educational program for female *Blau-Weiss* members.¹¹⁹

The question remains as to what extent the dress ideals and the leaders' attempts to enforce them resulted in a specific and uniform way of dressing within the *Blau-Weiss* movement. The *Blau-Weiss Blätter* presented different views about this. In 1913, it was reported that the audience at a Jewish youth groups' gymnastics competition had noticed the *Blau-Weiss* members because of their outward appearance. It was their hiking outfits, hiking sticks, their bags with bottles and cooking pots, as well as their marching as a uniform group, culminating in the presentation of their new blue and white flag.¹²⁰ Yet, a year later the *Blau-Weiss Blätter* reported that non-Jewish passersby often mistook *Blau-Weiss* groups for members of the *Wandervogel*.¹²¹ A similar observation was made in Austria, where the *Blau-Weiss* members were sometimes mistaken for *Pfadfinder* (Boy Scouts).¹²² We must take into consideration that the outfits during this time were strongly oriented toward the *Wandervogel* and that dress regulations were not strictly enforced. Furthermore, the *Wandervogel* had existed for a longer period, and it is thus unsurprising that passersby would recognize the groups that they knew without paying attention to details such as the different colors of the pins or the songs they sang. Even during the later period, when the *Kluft* was introduced, the outfits still partially resembled the outfits of the *Wandervogel* as similar items of clothing were incorporated. To be able to recognize the *Blau-Weiss* groups, those who saw them had to understand the meaning of their dress. It seems as if Jews were more likely to recognize the symbols and ways of dressing, maybe drawing on publications and knowledge of the movement's context, whereas non-Jews associated the appearance more often with other non-Jewish hiking groups they were familiar with. It is, however, likely that it was not the actual clothes worn and the perception by others that was most crucial but the significance the clothes had for *Blau-Weiss*. In forging new sartorial ideals and perpetuating them through publications and photographs, the members attributed meaning to the clothes and associated feelings of belonging and identification with them. This also became apparent in complaints by *Blau-Weiss* leaders. As the *Blau-Weiss Tracht* was increasingly seen as an expression of the core values of the movement after 1918, the extent to which the *Blau-Weiss* members conformed to the dress ideals was thus seen as an expression of the moral state of the movement. In 1924, in a talk about the preparation of youth for the migration to Palestine, leader Werner Bloch mourned the disappearance of the *Kluft*, the *Blau-Weiss* outfit, as a reflection of the morally weak

¹¹⁶ Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar*, 55.

¹¹⁷ Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar*, 57, 342.

¹¹⁸ Bundesleitung des Blau-Weiss, ed., *Hamischmar*, 342.

¹¹⁹ Anneliese Hohenstein, "Lehrwerkstätten für weibliches Handwerk," *Führerzeitung*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 3, December 1920, 54–55.

¹²⁰ Georg Todtmann, "Jüdische Wanderer beim Fest der jüdischen Turnerschaft in Berlin," *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 6, September 1913, 3, 4.

¹²¹ Kurt Joseph, "Von der Chanukkawanderung des zweiten Zuges," *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 12, March 1914, 3; Meybohm, *Erziehung zum Zionismus*, 45n179.

¹²² Rudolfine Waltuch, "Wiener Wanderleben," *Blau-Weiss Blätter*, Jahrgang 2, Nr. 9, January 1914, 3.

state of the movement: “The hiking club must be re-created. Forms are rotten, the bourgeois clothing that displaces the *Kluft* (the official outfit), and the prevalence of smoking are examples of this.”¹²³

The re-creation that Werner Bloch had hoped for did not occur; *Blau-Weiss* was officially dissolved in 1927. Yet, dress continued to matter even after the movement’s dissolution. *Blau-Weiss* influenced the emergence of new dress ideals in the successor organizations such as *Kadima* and *Kameraden* and, as we have seen in the quotation by Joseph Dunner, in the memory of its former members. The anniversary booklet from 1962 did not only contain individual contributions by former members that mentioned the importance of dress, but also devoted a large section to the evolution of the *Blau-Weiss* outfit, as shown in an exhibition organized for the occasion.¹²⁴ Former members also highlighted the importance and uniqueness of the *Blau-Weiss* outfit by contrasting it with the allegedly different *Wandervogel* outfits. Dolf Michaelis emphasized the “ridiculous” tendency of the girls to dress in traditional German costumes in the *Wandervogel*, implying that *Blau-Weiss* differed in this regard.¹²⁵ Given that *Blau-Weiss* girls sometimes wore similar outfits, it is likely that Michaelis constructed this difference in retrospect to emphasize the uniqueness of *Blau-Weiss*. It was thus probably not a coincidence that Joseph Dunner had highlighted the specific sartorial ideals in his memoir, pointing to a close interconnection of dress, feelings of belonging, and memory.

Conclusion

Taking the case study of the German-Jewish youth movement *Blau-Weiss*, this article has shown how a focus on dress as an “embodied practice” allows us to gain a deeper understanding of hybrid feelings of belonging between Jewishness and Germanness and the forging of a Zionist vision in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the beginning of the movement’s existence, dress was intended to express belonging to the Jewish hiking group and the aims it represented. Dress was seen to play a role in making the desired internal and external evolution into a new national Jewish identity visible. To the extent that concepts of this new national identity between Jewishness and Germanness changed, ideals and practices with regard to dress were altered. In the beginning, when the *Blau-Weiss* members favored the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine while intending to stay in Germany, they copied the way of dressing adopted by the German nationalist hiking group *Wandervogel*. Functional clothes designated for hiking in loden material, for both boys and girls, allowed them to differentiate themselves from their Jewish parents’ generation, who had adapted to the fashions of the German middle classes. While wanting to be recognized as Jewish, German notions of appropriateness exerted a strong influence. The aspiration to come across as “well dressed,” specifically “as Jews,” was intended to counter antisemitic prejudices. In comparison with the *Wandervogel*, *Blau-Weiss* seemed to be stricter in rejecting “bourgeois” dress items such as cravats and bow ties and, at least in theory, avoided the integration of elements from traditional German costumes and argued against the introduction of militaristic uniforms. Toward the end of the First World War, the concrete vision of migration to Palestine led to the reformulation of these ideals, with a more uniform outfit now introduced as an expression of the imagined distinct nationalist Jewish context. Although the items belonging to the outfit

¹²³ Werner Bloch, “Jüdische Jugend auf dem Wege nach Erez Israel,” *Blau Weiss Blätter, Neue Folge*, Jahrgang 1, Nr. 7, February 1924, 56.

¹²⁴ Franz Meyer, “Der Breslauer Bund,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 10, 11; Arie Ben-David, “Der Frankfurter Bund,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 14; “Ein Blick in die Ausstellung” and “Die Kluft,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 18.

¹²⁵ Michaelis, “Mein Blau-Weiss Erlebnis,” 48; Michaelis, “Unser grosses Erlebnis,” in *50 Jahre Blau-Weiss, Naharia, Das Jubiläumstreffen des Blau-Weiss, 18.-19. Mai 1962*, 22.

had not changed significantly, it was now presented, in publications and guidelines as the *Tracht* or *Kluft*, as the costume representing the movement. Publications, talks, tests, entrance procedures, and photographs were designed to communicate and shore up these ideals.

Articulated ideals and actual dress practices differed. Despite the official rejection of them, unifying elements played a role from the outset, and alongside the loden outfits, girls were also wearing the dresses with embroideries and flowers in their hair that were officially condemned as the nationalist German way of dressing that the *Wandervogel* was known for. Although *Blau-Weiss* made their Jewishness and group membership visible to others, differences in dress between the *Wandervogel* and *Blau-Weiss* were subtle. Items that indicated belonging to the group, such as the *Blau Weiss* pin, were small. For passersby recognizing the group was probably only possible with some knowledge of their dress and symbols and in combination with other activities, such as the singing of Jewish songs. However, the creation of new sartorial ideals likely fulfilled a more important function for the group. By charging an outfit with political meaning and dressing up in similar ways, the *Blau-Weiss* members could express feelings of identification and group belonging. In this sense, for the *Blau-Weiss* members to feel different and “Zionist” when wearing the *Kluft* was probably more important than to look different to the outside viewer. This close interconnection was also expressed in the importance of dress in the memory of *Blau-Weiss* members and conflicts about the moral state of the movement. Overall, dress was not an abstract category but an embodied practice that was interconnected with feelings, as well as ideals—feelings of belonging and feelings of being appropriately, or inappropriately, dressed as a Jew within changing social contexts in modern Germany. What has been shown here for the case study of the German-Jewish youth movement *Blau-Weiss* suggests possibilities for historical studies on diasporas, mobility, and migration, in which an investigation of dress can reveal intimate and changing feelings of national, social, and cultural belonging and identification across generations and (imagined) social and geographical spaces.

Acknowledgments. The research for this article was generously funded by the European Commission through a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship, IDCLOTHING 795309, held at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem from 2019 to 2021. Costs for image permissions were supported by the School for History, Politics and International Relations (HyPIR) at the University of Leicester with a Research Development Fund in 2021. For their feedback on earlier drafts of this article, I thank Anat Helman and Zoe Groves. I am very grateful to Susanna Kunze, Ulrike Pilarczyk, and Knut Bergbauer for their generous advice, Rebekka Grossman for helping me to get additional sources, Marc Volovici and Carly Silver for reading recommendations, and Beate Kuhnle for giving me access to the books I needed. I thank the archivists and their respective institutions for providing me with the images incorporated in this article. I am very grateful to the anonymous peer reviewers and their valuable feedback that helped to improve this article.

Svenja Bethke is an associate professor of modern European history and director of the Stanley Burton Centre for holocaust and genocide studies at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. She is the author of *Dance of the Razor’s Edge: Crime and Punishment in the Nazi Ghettos* (University of Toronto Press, 2021). For her current book project, *Between Diaspora and Eretz Israel: Dress in Times of Migration*, she was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship by The European Commission, hosted at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem from 2019 to 2021, and an AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) Research, Development and Engagement Fellowship (2023–2025).

Cite this article: Svenja Bethke. “Forging National Belonging: Transformation, Visibility, and Dress in the German-Jewish Youth Movement *Blau-Weiss*, 1912–1927,” *Central European History* 56, no. 3 (September 2023): 357–379. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938922001078>.